

Interreligious Understanding Guidebook

Changing Seasons, Changing World

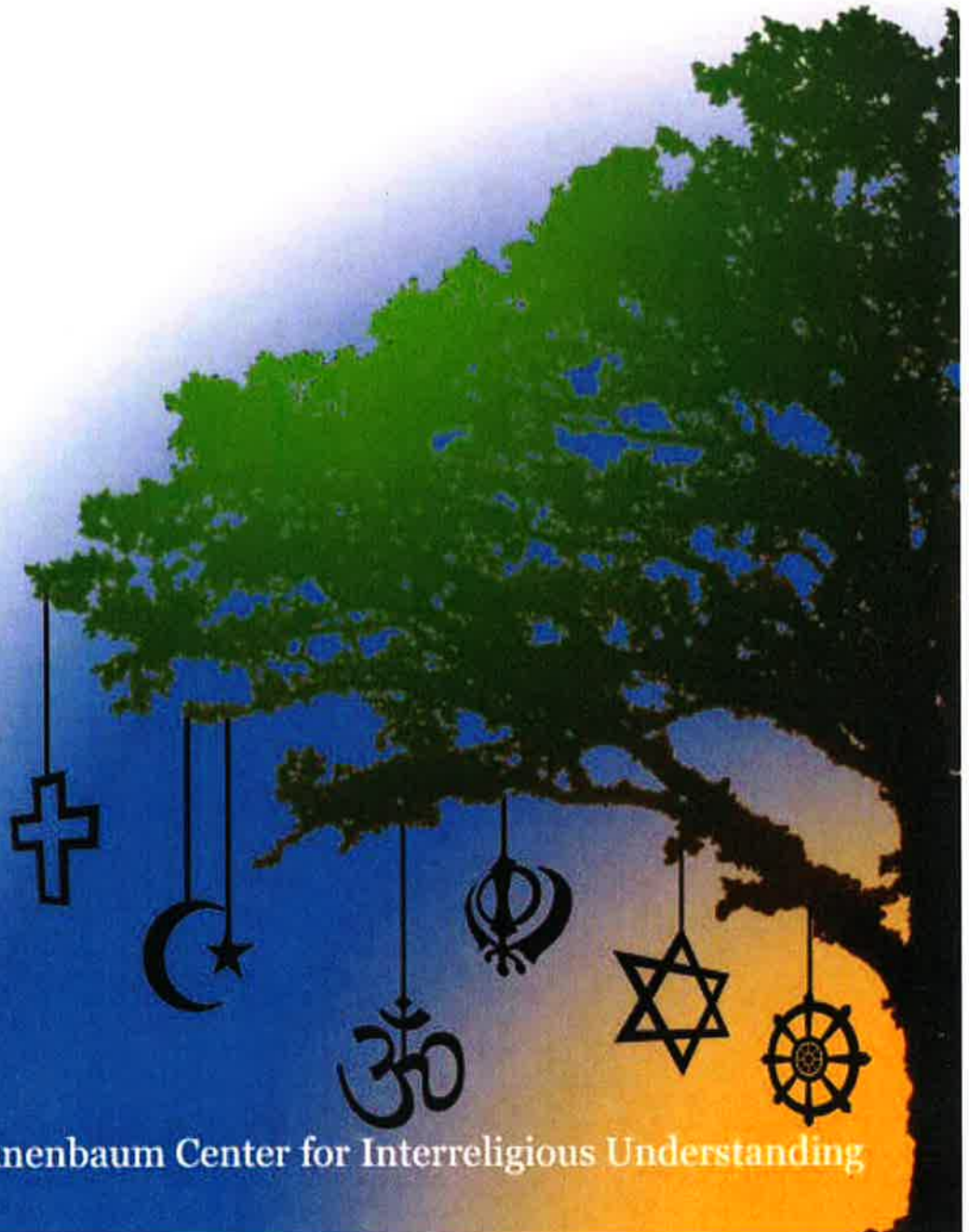


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UNIT 4: SPRING – FESTIVALS OF REBIRTH

LESSON 6: An “Eggxcellent” Adventure

Overview: In this lesson students learn about the history of Easter eggs and various ways in which Easter eggs are created and utilized throughout Europe. Students will play a game with the eggs, decorate their own, and make egg salad sandwiches.

Objective: Expose students to different types of celebrations of the spring season, including the importance of eggs.

Concepts: Teach all children, Teach and Learning About Cultures, Spring, Seasons, Celebrations

Skills: Geography, Social Studies

Materials: 2 hard-boiled eggs per student, large basket for eggs, mayonnaise, bread, brightly colored tissue paper, shallow bowls of water, one pair of scissors

Preparation: Prepare hard-boiled eggs or ask students to bring left over Easter eggs. Cut tissue paper into small pieces.

Other Recommended Books/ Materials: *Children Just Like Me (Series): Celebrations!* By Barnabas and Anabel Kindersley; *Festivals Together* by Sue Fitzjohn, Minda Weston, Judy Large; *Celebrating the Great Mother: A Handbook of Earth-Honoring Activities for Parents and Children* by Cait Johnson and Maura D. Shaw (www.religioustolerance.org)

PROCEDURE:

Step One: Provide students with background information on the significance of Easter eggs. Remind students to use their map reading skills to identify where the countries are that are mentioned in the lesson. (Information provided by holiday.net/easter)

Of all the symbols associated with Easter the **egg**, the symbol of fertility and new life, is the most identifiable. The customs and traditions of using eggs have been associated with **Easter** for centuries. Originally Easter eggs were painted with bright colors to represent the sunlight of spring and were used in Easter-egg rolling contests or given as gifts. After they were colored and etched with various designs the eggs were exchanged by romantic admirers, much the same as **valentines**. In Medieval times eggs were traditionally given at Easter to servant employees. In **Germany** eggs were given to children along with other **Easter gifts**. Different cultures have developed their own ways of decorating Easter

eggs. Crimson eggs, to honor the blood of Christ, are exchanged in [Greece](#). In parts of Germany and Austria green eggs are used on Maundy Thursday (Holy Thursday). Slavic people decorate their eggs in special patterns of [gold](#) and silver. Austrian artists design patterns by fastening ferns and tiny plants around the eggs, which are then boiled. The plants are then removed revealing a striking white pattern.

Many Polish and Ukrainian people decorate eggs with simple designs and colors. A number of eggs are made in the distinctive manner called **pysanki** (to design, to write). **Pysanki** eggs are a masterpiece of skill and workmanship. Melted beeswax is applied to the fresh white egg. It is then dipped in successive baths of dye. After each dip, wax is painted over the area where the preceding color is to remain. Eventually a complex pattern of lines and colors emerges into a work of art. In Germany and other countries, eggs used for cooking are not broken, but the contents are removed by [piercing](#) the end of each egg with a needle and blowing the contents into a bowl. The hollow eggs are dyed and hung from shrubs and trees during Easter Week. The Armenian people sometimes decorate hollow eggs with pictures of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and other religious designs.

Eggs play an important part in Easter sports and games. Many Roman people celebrated the Easter season by running races on an oval track and giving eggs as prizes. Two traditional Easter egg games are the Easter Egg Hunt and the Easter Egg Roll. On Easter morning many children join in a search to locate the eggs that the Easter Bunny has hidden while they were asleep. The searching might continue throughout the house. Sometimes prizes of candy are awaiting the child finding the most eggs. Easter egg hunts can be also part of a community's celebration of the holiday. The eggs are hidden in public places and the children of the community are invited to find the eggs.

The rules of an Easter Egg Roll are to see who can roll an egg the greatest distance or can make the roll without breaking it, usually down a grassy hillside or slope. A famous American egg rolling takes place on the White House Lawn. Hundreds of children come with baskets filled with brightly decorated eggs and roll them down the famous lawn, hoping the President of the United States is enjoying the fun.

Step Two: People all over the world celebrate Easter in different ways. Ask students to reflect on the way that they have celebrated Easter or observed other people celebrate Easter. Ask them to share their responses.

Step Three: Remind students of the rules of respect, prior to starting the Bulgarian Egg Game. Explain to students that you are going to participate in two different activities involving Easter eggs. The first activity is the Bulgarian Egg game. Teacher will put half of the hard-boiled eggs in a central basket. Two students will be selected to start the game. The two students will each select an

egg. Students will tap their eggs together until one cracks. The student whose egg is stronger wins the game. The game continues as each child challenges the winner until all the eggs are cracked.

Step Four: After students have cracked all the eggs, ask students to wash their hands thoroughly. Explain that the teacher is going to lead them in making egg salad sandwiches. (Note: Make sure you are aware of dietary restrictions, allergies, etc. and take those needs into account before doing this part of the lesson). Ask students to help in peeling off the egg shells. Teacher will chop up the eggs, mix mayonnaise in, and spread the egg salad on to bread, crackers or matzo bread for students to enjoy.

Step Five: Rejoin as a class. Using the remaining eggs (there should be at least one per student leftover) explain to students that you are going to be dying eggs using the tissue paper. Students should be given five sheets of tissue paper and a shallow bowl of water to work with. Students will wet the tissue paper, and then wrap the eggs with the various colors. They should gently remove any excess moisture, and leave the tissue paper on the egg for at least an hour. After an hour has passed students should take the tissue paper off the egg, and admire their work.